

## **Llais Cymru – Public Board Meeting**

**Wednesday 22 January 2025**

**Venue: Parkway Hotel & Spa, Cwmbran Drive, Cwmbran, NP44  
3UW**

Meeting to start at 10:00am – 15:00

### **Members:**

Medwin Hughes  
Alyson Thomas  
Bamidele Adenipekun  
Jack Evershed  
Jason Smith  
Karen Lewis  
Rajan Madhok  
Mwoyo Makuto

Chair  
Chief Executive  
Non-Executive  
Non-Executive  
Non-Executive  
Non-Executive  
Non-Executive  
Associate Member

### **Attendees:**

Angela Mutlow  
Ben Eaton

Joanne Bolton

Richard Bevan  
Lisa Charles  
Donna Coleman  
Roxanne Treacy  
John Stretton  
Amelia Mansfield

Director of Operations  
Strategic Director of Organisational Strategy  
and Engagement  
Strategic Director of Operations and  
Corporate Services  
Interim Board Secretary  
Regional Director for Gwent  
Regional Director for West Wales  
Head of Insights and Engagement  
Complaints Advocate, West Wales region  
Complaints Advocate, Cardiff & the Vale of  
Glamorgan region

### **Other attendees:**

Kirsty Contreras-Stacey

Governance Officer (minute taker)

## Welcome, introductions

- 1.0 The Chair welcomed everybody to the meeting and extended a warm welcome to all joining the meeting online.
- 1.1 Apologies were received from Grace Quantock (Deputy Chair).

## Declarations of interests

- 2.0 One declaration of interest was raised by Rajan Madhok and noted he had finished as Non-Executive Director with the Wirral University NHS Foundation Trust. It was confirmed that it has been registered in line with organisational policy.

## Valuing people's stories: Examples of how an individual's experience can help change services for the better

- 3.0 The Strategic Director of Organisational Strategy and Engagement outlined this section of the agenda, which would become a standing agenda item for each Board meeting. The Board would hear stories of people's experiences of engaging with or receiving health and social care services.
- 3.1 Two presentations were made one by a Complaints Advocate for West Wales region, and one from a Complaints Advocate for Cardiff & the Vale region.
- 3.2 John Stretton shared a story about the difficulties a patient with diabetes had with their care and treatment from the GP practice. They had difficulties getting an appointment as well as obtaining urgent tests. The procedures in place in the practice made it very difficult to get an urgent test as the patient couldn't get an appointment to see the GP easily.
- 3.3 The patient tried, without success to get their concerns dealt with directly with the practice, so raised their concerns with the local health board. Not satisfied with the response received, the patient sought support from our complaints advocacy service.

- 3.4 Our complaints advocate was able to arrange a meeting which they attended with the patient and the GP practice. This meant the patient was able to talk through their concerns with practice staff.
- 3.5 As a result, the patient had a further consultation with the GP and all the necessary arrangements were made for tests. The GP surgery sent a further response to the complaint with a full apology, which the patient was happy with.
- 3.6 Amelia Mansfield also shared a patient's experience where the patient was discharged from hospital with a care package. The lack of notes left at the patients' home meant that loved ones were unable to see when district nursing and other health and social care staff had attended to patient's needs.
- 3.7 Lack of communication between the health and social care staff and the family meant that the patients loved ones found it very stressful trying to contact services to find out who was responsible for what and when.
- 3.8 A concerns meeting was held with health care staff where the complainant described the experiences and expressed that there should be a more joined up approach between care services.
- 3.9 The Health Board acknowledged and recognised that communication was an issue and there was lack of record keeping especially in the patient's home. The Health Board advised that they would improve the system, including the possibility of a range of actions in response to the issues raised in the complaint. This included considering:
- creating care coordinator roles to assist patients and their loved ones when they are receiving a package of care
  - producing resource packs to be kept in patient's homes containing essential information and useful contacts
  - using the complainant's experience to form part of the staff learning and development programme
- 3.10 The Chair and board members welcomed the new approach of hearing people's stories directly at Board meetings. The Chair thanked colleagues for the stories and emphasised the gratitude of

Llais to all the staff involved for their professionalism and understanding in taking forward this important work.

### Spotlight on our activities: Accessing services in the Welsh language

- 4.0 The Strategic Director of Organisational Strategy and Engagement introduced a further new standing item for Board agenda, which would place a spotlight at each meeting on a particular area of Llais activities.
- 4.1 The Regional Director for West Wales, who was also the Chair of Llais's Welsh Language Steering Group, and the Llais Head of Insights and Engagement welcomed the opportunity to provide a spotlight report on Llais's work in relation to the Welsh language.
- 4.2 The focus of the discussion was on the work that had been done to support the people of Wales accessing health and social care services in the Welsh language.
- 4.3 Board members heard that a Llais Welsh language working group had been set up to support our Welsh language speakers and those learning or wishing to learn to get together to speak and practice the Welsh language in our workplaces. It was hoped that the work of the group would help Llais build a welcoming, encouraging and supportive environment for staff and volunteers to use the Welsh language confidently when carrying out their activities.
- 4.4 Work had also been underway to self-assess our organisational performance against the requirements of the Welsh Language Standards. This assessment showed positive progress across the organisation, as well as highlighting areas where further development was required. Regular liaison took place with the Welsh Language Commissioner's Office to take advice and support on compliance matters as well as good practice more broadly.
- 4.5 The Strategic Director of Organisational Strategy and Engagement confirmed that Llais was continuing to look at our approach to actively promote the increased use of Welsh and ensure we have an increasing capability through the employment of Welsh speakers.

- 4.6 Looking outwards, Llais had taken forward some work to hear from people about their experiences of accessing health and social care services in the Welsh language. What we heard showed that people's experiences vary, and it was not always easy for people to access services consistently in the Welsh language.
- 4.7 Being able to express yourself in your first language was seen as very important when talking about personal matters, including, for example talking about sensitive medical issues. We heard about how being able to speak in Welsh aided recovery and provided comfort at difficult times in the lives of individuals and families, and how much harder it was when this wasn't possible because Welsh speaking health and social care staff were not available.
- 4.8 Overall, more work was needed in the health and social care sector to make the active offer more consistent across Wales by increasing the availability of Welsh speaking health and social care staff. It was confirmed that across Wales, Llais would be making representations to health and social care bodies in support of bi-lingual care and support.
- 4.9 The Chair confirmed that Welsh speakers were important from a patient and service user perspective. Llais needs to continue to capture and articulate the voices of the people of Wales. The Chair thanked all of those involved in the presentation for the continuing work across Wales to promote the Welsh language within Llais and in health and social care services to better meet the needs of Welsh speakers.

## Health and social care services in Gwent

- 5.0 The Chair welcomed the Regional Director for Gwent. He explained that the evening before Board members had attended an event hosted by the Gwent region for a range of stakeholders and members of the public. The Chair expressed his sincere gratitude to the Regional Director for Gwent and the Gwent team for all the hard work and excellent progress made by the Gwent team, which was clearly evident in the event.
- 5.1 The Regional Director for Gwent delivered a presentation for the Board about health and social care services in the region. Priority areas for the region included community services and mental health

services. Some of the key points of the presentation were highlighted and discussed.

5.2 The Regional Director described the extreme pressures in the health and social care system over the winter period, and the work being done by services to signpost people to the best source of care, support and information. She summarised the main concerns shared by people in the Gwent region about their health and social care services, in particular:

- access to health services, including urgent and emergency care, GP services and dentists
- support for people waiting for social care assessments
- access to social workers
- supporting people with poor mental health
- getting home from hospital at the right time with the right care and support.

5.4 The Gwent Region was working with health and social care services across the region to drive improvement in all these areas. For example, the region was actively engaged in discussions with the health board and local authorities about the Welsh Government's 50 day challenge, aimed at reducing long waits for discharge home. The current target was 15% and currently Gwent had achieved an 11% reduction.

5.7 The Chair thanked the Regional Director for the presentation and reiterated his thanks to the Regional Team in Gwent for all the work it was taking forward.

### **Health and social care services in Wales: Key matters across our regions**

6.0 A presentation was provided by the Director of Operations summarising the key health and social care matters affecting people across all Llais regions in Wales.

6.1 It was confirmed that access to NHS dental services continued to be a significant challenge for people right across Wales. Many people were continuing to go without treatment or to arrange private treatment if they could afford it.



- 6.2 It was confirmed that GP access remained a problem across Wales, and the concerns around urgent and emergency care shared by the Gwent Region were being experienced across Wales.
- 6.3 Also, it was reported that there were also long waits for outpatient appointments and treatments in many specialties. There was also pressure on available places in care homes with evidence of increased levels of closure of beds or entire homes closing due to funding challenges and budget reductions from local commissioners.
- 6.4 The Chair thanked the Director of Operations for the comprehensive presentation.

## Report from the Chair

- 7.1 The Chair highlighted that healthcare in Wales was currently showing a very complex picture with issues in emergency care and on waiting lists, as outlined in the previous reports. The Chair emphasised that there are concerns that patient safety was being compromised as a result of these pressures.
- 7.2 One board member highlighted some of the simple measures that could be considered to make emergency departments safer and more comfortable places for patients whilst they had to wait. Further action is required across Wales to make the small but important changes that can be made in the short term while looking to address the longer term, systemic issues affecting our health and social care services.
- 7.3 The Chair emphasised the importance of maintaining regular conversations at a national level with the NHS Executive and the Welsh Government and to actively contribute to the plans and improvement actions needed to make things better.
- 7.4 Llais could play a critical role by ensuring that the voices of people and communities voices are at the centre of this thinking and planning. Llais would continue to meet its clear responsibility to bring this feedback directly to key stakeholders and decision makers.

## Chief Executive's report

- 8.0 The Chief Executive introduced a report covering key activities she had been directly involved in since the last Board meeting.
- 8.1 As well as a range of discussions with partners including Care Inspectorate Wales, Healthcare Inspectorate Wales and a series of professional regulators to discuss our activities and share information about health and social care services in Wales, she also highlighted:
- Progress with our joint work with the Bevan Commission on 'Silly Rules'
  - Working in partnership with Tenovus cancer care to create a new complaints advocacy role in Llais focused on supporting people to raise concerns about their cancer care
  - Opportunities for joint working with the Older People's Commissioner for Wales.
- 8.2 The Chief Executive reported that the emergency department challenges discussed previously would need to inform the Welsh Government's development of new performance measures for emergency departments. She reiterated the importance of Llais informing and influencing that development so that patient voices were at the centre of these considerations.
- 8.3 Looking internally, work was underway to develop our Annual Plan priorities for 2024/25 for discussion by the Board and sign off at the public board meeting in March 2025.

## Performance, service and planning matters

- 9.0 The Strategic Director of Organisational Strategy and Engagement provided a summary of our performance against our annual plan priorities for 2024/2025.
- 9.1 He highlighted that there are a total of 146 specific objectives relating to our Annual Plan 2024-25. Of these:
- 108 were on track
  - 19 were showing as being 'behind'



- 7 were showing as being 'at risk'
- 5 had been completed or closed.

9.2 Further detail was provided to explain the actions that were underway to address those objectives showing as being behind or at risk. The Board noted the actions being taken.

9.3 The Board also noted the scale of activities undertaken so far this year, the common areas of feedback from the public across Wales, and the actions being taken by Llais staff in response to inform and influence improvement actions.

## Llais Behavioural Framework

10.0 The Board was asked to consider the further strengthening of our Behavioural Framework by adding additional guidance describing unhelpful behaviours for senior leaders and board members in the areas of:

- Effective communication and engagement
- Integrity
- Empowering
- People driven
- Learning and improving
- Inclusivity
- Working together
- Leadership
- Respect.

10.1 Board members recognised the importance of placing these expectations in context, for example, under effective communication and engagement, 'Failing to share key information' would need to acknowledge that, in some cases, it would not be possible to share information because of a need to ensure confidentiality, etc.

10.2 **Approved** – Board members approved the paper, subject to the amendments needed to reflect the Board discussion, as set out above. Once finalised, the Framework is to be published to the Llais website and awareness raising undertaken with Llais staff and volunteers.

## **Draft financial plan 2025/2026 & Finance update report**

- 11.0 The finance report was presented by the Strategic Director of Operations and Corporate Services. At the end of December 2024, a cumulative underspend of £160,000 was reported, which was 2% of Llais' total budget.
- 11.1 The underspend mentioned included a £100,000 contingency (unallocated budget). Of the £100,000, £40,000 would be allocated to support the implementation of the Organisational Change Policy to support the planned office relocations and related staff relocation costs. Additionally, Llais would retain some funds within the contingency budget to address any business-critical, unplanned, or unforeseen events that may arise to the end of the financial year.
- 11.2 The Strategic Director of Operations and Corporate Services confirmed there was an emerging financial risk related to dilapidations requirements due to the office relocations. Llais had sought additional funding to cover the costs, and discussions were on-going with the Welsh Government about the treatment of dilapidations expenditure in our budgeting arrangements. Further was also being undertaken with surveyors to confirm final dilapidation costs.
- 11.3 The Welsh Government had confirmed that Llais would be provided with an overall uplift of 3% for the 2025/2026 budget, compared to the 2024/25 baseline funding. This equated to an additional £205,000 of funding. Llais's new baseline budget would then be £7,928,000. It was anticipated that this budget would be approved by the Senedd as part of the Welsh Government's final budget in February 2025.
- 11.4 It was noted that this budget allocation would be £312,000 less than that requested in Llais's estimate submission. The Executive Team had scrutinised the budget submission in comparison to the Welsh Government's December draft budget announcement, and action was underway to model options and scenarios taking into account the potential impact on delivery.

## Workforce update, including dashboard

- 12.0 The Strategic Director of Operations and Corporate Services presented the workforce report and dashboard for the period October to December 2024. Key elements of the report related to staff wellbeing, sickness levels, mandatory e-learning and performance appraisals.
- 12.1 The staff wellbeing survey was carried out during this quarter. There had been a very high level of engagement from staff with the survey, which was positive. The results were mixed, but they gave a clear indication that further action was needed to address key aspects associated with staff well-being, including workload concerns. The Executive Team was working with staff to respond to the issues raised.
- 12.2 This quarter has seen an increase in sickness levels, and in particular a rise in long-term sickness. In some cases, work related stress has been identified as a reason. This would continue to be monitored and responded to at an organisational level.
- 12.3 At an individual level, colleagues were being supported in their return to work, eg., through phased returns or reasonable adjustments. A review of sickness reporting had identified some areas for improvement in timely reporting of sickness, and in carrying out and recording key actions such as return to work interviews.
- 12.4 Performance appraisal levels were currently lower than required. Action was underway to better understand the reasons for the lower recorded levels, so that targeted action could be taken to make sure appraisal discussions took place and were recorded by the end of March 2025, as required.

## Corporate risk report

- 13.0 The Interim Board Secretary presented the Corporate Risk Report and Corporate Risk Register for January 2025. The documents were continuing to be redeveloped with the scrutiny and advice of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee, but also from the wider

Board at development sessions. Further changes and developments would continue to be made over the coming weeks, including adding a further commentary/progress column, as agreed with the committee.

- 13.1 It was confirmed that there were 14 risks on the register. One new risk had been added around staff sickness and wellbeing. No risks had increased their score in the last period. Three risks had reduced their scores, and these were around digital, IT and cyber risks and the financial position risk.
- 13.2 10 risks had remained the same. However, there were a range of actions for each, which had maintained them at their recent levels. However, for all risks new areas of action have been or are identified. The Interim Board Secretary also confirmed the next steps which would be to build risk dashboard linked to the OKR performance management system and other software available in Llais.
- 13.3 The new risk management strategy, which the Board had supported in development sessions would be finalised and submitted to the Board for approval in March 2025.

#### **Minutes of the last meeting: Wednesday 25 September 2024 and 18 December 2024**

- 14.0 The minutes of the Public Board meetings held on 25 September 2024 and 18 December 2024 were agreed and accepted as accurate records.

#### **Actions**

- 15.0 The Interim Board Secretary provided an update on progress with actions. It was noted that all actions had been completed with the exception of two relating to the finalisation of risk and workforce dashboards. These would be submitted to the March 2025 Board meeting. It was agreed that all completed actions would be moved to the closed actions section of the log.

## **Report from Board Committees:**

### **- Audit and Risk Assurance committee**

### **- Workforce, Remuneration and Terms of Service Committee**

#### **Audit and Risk Assurance Committee**

16.0 The Committee chair provided an update on the Audit and Risk Committee. The last formal meeting was held on 13 December 2024. It was attended by all members of the committee and representatives of internal audit, external audit, and senior colleagues on the Executive Team in Llais.

16.1 The Committee Chair confirmed further work was carried out on the corporate risk register.

16.2 Cyber, digital and IT remained a focus on what needed to be done to reduce the risks and refine risk management processes.

16.3 The Committee Chair confirmed that the Audit, Risk and Assurance Committee effectiveness review will now be scheduled for April 2025 but that the next meeting would take place in the 5 March 2025.

#### **Workforce, Remuneration and Terms of Service Committee**

16.4 In the absence of the chair of the committee, the Interim Board Secretary gave an overview of the first meeting of the newly constituted committee. The committee held its inaugural meeting on the 16 October 2024 and focused on workforce metrics, the workforce dashboard and the workforce policy prioritisation.

16.5 The next meeting would be held in March 2025, but a date was currently being confirmed as the original date of the meeting earlier in 2025 had to be postponed.

16.5 The Interim Board Secretary also reported that the staff of Llais received a pay uplift for 2024/2025 under the Agenda for Change arrangements. However, the only staff member who did not receive an automatic uplift was the Chief Executive who was covered by the Very Senior Manager (VSM) category. The VSM category received a 5% uplift back dated to April 2024.

- 16.6 Therefore, in line with standing orders and procedures the Workforce, Remuneration and Terms of Service Committee confirmed the application of the uplift via email, co-ordinated by the Interim Board Secretary. The Board endorsed the action taken by the committee.

### **Chair's action for ratification – recruitment of an Equity, Diversity and Inclusion lead**

- 17.0 The Interim Board Secretary explained that when the revised Standing Orders were approved earlier in the year, the Board added a provision for Chair's Action for urgent decisions. The first use of this provision was reported for the approval to recruit to the Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Lead for Llais.
- 17.1 This was undertaken due to the need to recruit before a formal Board meeting was scheduled. As per Standing Orders the full Board ratified the decision made by the Chair supported by the Chief Executive and 3 non-executives in November 2024.

### **Any other business**

- 18.0 No further business was identified for discussion.

### **Forward look and Board workplan**

- 19.0 The forward look noted, and it was confirmed that a new forward look and plan of business will be developed and submitted to the Board for approval in March 2025 to cover 2025/2026.

### **Questions from the Public**

- 20.0 The Chair noted that no questions had been received from members of the public.

### **Papers for information only**

- 21.0 The board noted for information the confirmed Audit and Risk Assurance Committee minutes from its meeting of the 18 September 2024.

**The meeting closed 14:55**